

Social Workers Act to be tabled next parliamentary session

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KUCHING: The Social Workers Act will be tabled in the next parliamentary sitting in October to improve the professionalism of social workers in the country.

Once passed, social workers in the country would need to register themselves so that they could go for skills training, said Minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development Datuk Fatimah Abdullah.

Furthermore, she added, it was timely to distinguish between volunteers and those who have a duty to assist others.

"We need to have improvement in the professionalism of our social workers because of the changes in our environment and situations, and complexity of each case.

"For instance, you need to be able to assess the complex reason behind a child's neglect and physical abuse whilst ensuring the child is not only protected but can thrive.

"Having made the skilled assessment, a social worker's

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Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, Minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development

role is then to take action which will help these people have a better life," she told the press after opening the 'Third Conference in Advancing Social Work Series: Improving Practice Competencies through Education and Mentoring' organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.

She said although the society entrusted social workers with such heavy tasks, there had been little official recognition for their training as professionals.

As such, with the drafting of the legislation, those needing help would have the assurance that they would be attended to by competent social workers adhering to professional code of ethics, she said.

She pointed out that the ministry had conducted

two programmes with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to produce a framework for the implementation of the Social Workers Act.

She added that currently the state had 656 social workers registered with the Society Welfare Department.

Malaysia Association of Social Workers (MASW) president Teoh Ai Hua said the proposed Act was the government's commitment to improve the services of social workers.

"We need to have a law to recognise our social workers and at the same time support them. At the moment, we have 200 members throughout the country," he said, adding that the members comprised those from Social Welfare Department, National Anti-Drugs Agency, hospitals and NGOs.



CONFERENCE OPENS: Fatimah hits the gong to open the 'Third Conference in Advancing Social Series: Improving Practice Competencies through Education and Mentoring'. Gill Raja is at second right, while Teoh on far left and Mohd Fadzil third left.